

Drink up!

County to allow liquor sales on Sunday

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By Paige L. Hill

Buy your liquor on Sunday.

For the first time in Montgomery County history, alcohol will be sold on Sundays, according to County Executive Isiah “Ike” Legget (D), who pushed through the executive order Wednesday.

“This is happening, and we’re looking at implementing it as soon as late November in county liquor stores,” county spokeswoman Donna Bigler said Tuesday. “It seems that everyone is on board, so this is happening.”

Under Leggett’s plan, liquor will be introduced during a six month trial basis in the 12 county-owned liquor stores. The county’s alcohol sales are so rigidly regulated that spirits such as vodka, tequila and whiskey are only sold at county-owned liquor stores, not private establishments. The push to get liquor selling on Sundays by the end of November is meant to help the county cash in on the historically higher-than-average sales around the holidays for parties and gatherings.

“We should have done this a long time ago — what is the downside?” Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large) said.

Councilman Mike Knapp (D-Dist. 2) estimated the county would make an additional \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year by selling liquor on the seventh day. But some county residents believe Sundays should remain a sacred or religious day, meaning no booze.

“One thing I liked about this county was its conservative, traditional values,” Rockville resident Jaelynn Macomb said Tuesday. “I mean, if you really need to drink on a Sunday, then plan ahead.”

Others point to the financial implications of the move for restaurants that serve wine and beer on Sundays.

“Did you consider the hardship this will cause these small business owners in the form of decreased sales on the one day they don’t have to compete with the hand that feeds them?” Germantown resident Lewis Gertz wrote in an open letter county council members and Leggett.

The county acts as liquor distributor to restaurants in a move that earns brings in roughly \$20 million in revenue a year.

“I think that very few people even buy hard liquor,” said Councilman George Leventhal (D-At large), who does not openly support the plan. “If they are going to buy it on Sunday, then they won’t buy it on Thursday.”

But county council members had no power to actually change the course of Leggett's executive order, as the county's Department of Liquor resides solely under his executive office.